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OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON
THE REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS
FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
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GENERAL REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Statement submitted by the World Federation of United Nations Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraph 10 of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/80.

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1. The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) has followed the current review process very closely since its outset and has presented written or oral statements to all intergovernmental meetings held thus far. On each occasion, WFUNA has strongly emphasized that the ultimate aim of the review should be the broadening of non-governmental organizations' access, including national organizations, to the United Nations and the strengthening of the participatory rights of non-governmental organizations.

2. WFUNA has also carefully considered the positions of the European Union, the United States of America and the Group of 77, as well as those of the many non-governmental organizations that have participated in the discussions. In addition, WFUNA has participated in several informal meetings and consultations

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* E/AC.70/1995/1.

with member States, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations Secretariat. These exchanges, for which WFUNA is very grateful, have helped immensely as WFUNA has thoroughly examined the draft resolution submitted by the Secretariat (E/AC.70/1995/CRP.1).

3. The general debate seems to be coming to its conclusion and WFUNA has reached the stage of discussing specific wording. WFUNA has thus prepared a compilation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) and the above-mentioned conference room paper, along with some proposed modifications that attempt to address the concerns and points of view of other parties, which WFUNA hopes will be helpful. It should be noted, however, that the contents of the compilation represent only the views of WFUNA; the compilation is available from WFUNA.

4. In the present statement, WFUNA wishes to take the opportunity to offer some general comments about the approaches it has used in the more detailed document and the general principles underlying its position. In view of the fact that the new Economic and Social Council resolution is expected to regulate relations between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations for the next several years, WFUNA suggests that the text omit what could be termed unnecessary ideological or political references contained in the introduction and in some other parts of the text. A sound legal document should not include such statements for the simple reason that they often leave open the possibility of unfortunate or controversial interpretations. A brief statement of the guiding principles that underlie the resolution is probably desirable and could easily be formulated.

5. With regard to the participatory rights of non-governmental organizations, WFUNA is deeply concerned that they are in danger of being significantly curtailed by several provisions in the proposed draft resolution. For example, WFUNA objects to:

(a) The conditionality attached to the circulation by the Secretary-General of written statements of non-governmental organizations (para. 31);

(b) Imposing on non-governmental organizations the requirement to coordinate joint oral and written submissions by non-governmental organizations (paras. 11 and 51).

6. In addition, although WFUNA recognizes the intergovernmental character of United Nations conferences, it believes that the assertion in paragraph 50 that non-governmental organizations should have no negotiating role in the work of the conference and its preparatory process is both discouraging and unnecessary. Past practice has shown that innovative mechanisms can be found to allow de facto negotiations involving non-governmental organizations.

7. Over the years and especially very recently, consultation with the Secretariat and the strengthening of logistic support for relations with non-governmental organizations has become a matter of importance and urgency. In recognition of this importance, WFUNA has suggested the introduction of uniform language and the considerable strengthening of the wording of old section 10.

8. WFUNA wishes to express its great appreciation that for the first time, rules for non-governmental organizations' participation in United Nations conferences are included in the text proposed by the Secretariat - perhaps in direct response to repeated requests from non-governmental organizations. We would like to point out the importance of admitting to United Nations conferences non-governmental organizations not in consultative status, whether international, regional, national or affiliates of non-governmental organizations in consultative status. While consultative status relates to an ongoing, quasi-permanent relationship, this accreditation constitutes a recognition of the expertise of non-consultative non-governmental organizations on the issues being addressed by the conference. Consequently, membership in an international non-governmental organization in consultative status should have no bearing whatsoever as to whether a national non-governmental organization should be eligible for accreditation to a United Nations conference. The only criteria for admission should be those set out in old section 7. Although it proposes some modifications to the wording of section 7, WFUNA is of the view that the procedures outlined in this section have worked relatively well in the past.

9. Although WFUNA appreciates efforts to define national non-governmental organizations more precisely, it disagrees with the enumeration given in paragraph 7 of the proposed draft. In particular, the formula of "major groups" creates confusion because of its tautology. The other examples given of non-governmental organizations do not appear to be based on any common criteria or factors. Because no enumeration will be rationally clear, WFUNA proposes that this paragraph be either worded more generally or deleted altogether.

10. Notwithstanding this fact, WFUNA must use this opportunity to register publicly its objection to the recent practice of the secretariats of the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development to impose, without any legislative authority and at the last minute, limitations on the number of persons allowed to be registered by accredited non-governmental organizations. Experience has shown that even if all persons delegated by a non-governmental organization are registered, there is no danger of a deluge in the conference room so long as there is a system of special access passes.

11. All interested parties are agreed that the time has come to rationalize and harmonize relations between non-governmental organizations and the entire United Nations system, including the specialized agencies. WFUNA therefore submits that paragraphs 19 and 20 are too weak and proposes that a separate, special resolution on this matter be adopted by the Council.

12. Finally, WFUNA would like to re-emphasize its readiness to offer its expertise in the further drafting of a new resolution governing these extremely important consultative arrangements between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations.